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**Who Is Paloma Carter**

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**Who Is Paloma Carter**

**By**

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**Master's Report**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this film to everyone who takes risks in the search to find their true voice.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are an overwhelming number of people that I wish to acknowledge in the community here at the University of Texas and outside. These are people who have shown me support, given me opportunities and collaborated their time, efforts and talent into my thesis film.

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## **Abstract**

### **Who Is Paloma Carter**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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This Master's Report chronicles the process of inception, pre-production, production and post-production for *Who Is Paloma Carter*, a thesis film made as part of the MFA in Film Production at The University of Texas at Austin's RTF Program, as well as the insights gained through these stages and the course of the entire program.

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# INTRODUCTION

## **The Film School Journey**

Although this report is a documentation of the creation and development of my thesis film, *Who Is Paloma Carter*, it also partly chronicles my experience in this MFA program. That is perhaps only natural and fitting, since the three year structure leads up to the thesis project, putting us through the paces and practice of developing, writing, directing, editing and finishing a film at a smaller scale prior to our theses projects. It is easy to forget, during the pre-production and work on each film we do in this program, that it is the process that is of value. Although my thesis film is an exciting step towards finding a cinematic voice, it is certainly not the only thing I take away from this program.

In hindsight, it took a while for me to find the singular focus required to bring a film to completion the way only the director can, even if other people are involved in key roles such as editing and writing. Although I was duly immersed in and exploring screenwriting, pre-production and all the other creative processes of being a writer / director, the kind of clarity and decisiveness needed to bring a film to fruition in its final stages eluded me initially.

It has been a joy to ultimately realize that essential element of directing. Part of the reason why this has taken time, has been simply getting to know the various different mechanisms of filmmaking. Many people come into this program completely certain that they want to be a writer / director. This has, quite honestly, influenced me to a large extent. This is not to say that the time I have invested in screenwriting has not been genuine. I have been intrigued by the process and craft of screenwriting, and I've of course wanted to create films stemming from my own unique experiences and perspective.

After having a go at three short narrative scripts, directing and then *rewriting them in the editing process*, I finally have a better understanding of the three-act structure. While this was something that was introduced to us conceptually very early in the program, I think there are a couple of reasons why I struggled with effectively understanding and using this essential platform of screenwriting. Essentially though, I see that I've often felt torn between getting to know the process of writing a script, versus spending time getting really good at *realizing* it. If this were an ideal world, I would spend another three years of my life practicing screenwriting, because I think it's a wonderful, powerful process. However, a more realistic and hopefully immediate future goal is to summon the universe to conjure up a talented collaborator that I can co-develop a project, with the aim of directing it.

Apart from the writing process, there is so much else going on in terms of learning. I've enjoyed coming to appreciate the intricacy and power of sound, for example, and how vital it is not only towards building environments, atmosphere and mood, but also as an essential psychological tool of storytelling. We have the privilege of professional sound mixes for our films, but I wanted to be more knowledgeable and comfortable with this area of the process as a filmmaker.

While starting to write early scripts, learning about sound and other areas of filmmaking, I have also been deeply interested in cinematography. As I came to know the tools and mechanisms of the pre-production process, it was hard for me not to take over the role of the cinematographer: visualizing a scene. I deeply care about elements such as *mise-en-scene* and lighting, for example, both important parts of the psychology of a story yet so intricately tied to cinematography. However, these are certainly concerns within the scope of a director's role as well. I wanted to really explore whether some of this was just a matter of shying away from the role of a director that newcomers often deal with.

In short, I've spent some energy negotiating the imperative to develop as a director against the desire to train as a Director of Photography. I've gained a deep appreciation for the all-consuming lifestyle of being a working DP. It's a discipline that combines mental and creative insight with physicality, and appeals to me on a number of levels. Even though the program is a wonderful opportunity to learn about different roles in filmmaking, gender has still sometimes proven a challenge in this area. Our first year cinematography instructor provided valuable insight in acknowledging that certain environments do indeed call for women in the camera department to work harder to prove themselves than men. The challenge of this somehow appealed to me. Cameras have been an important part of my life and part of the reason that I'm in the program, and it was important to understand why this was a world that wasn't as readily available to me as I'd hoped. I've been part of the Camera or G&E departments of various sets, but the thesis films in particular have definitely been a test of endurance that I'm proud to have put myself through.

Recent graduate Annie Silverstein's thesis film, for example, was an important learning experience for me because it was the most mature set I had been on yet. There was a quiet intensity to the way the Department Heads handled a sensitive story with child actors and multiple units in tricky, outdoor conditions. The perseverance of focus maintained by the Director throughout was eye opening. One of the aspects of directing that I had been struggling with was really having the presence of mind on set to take sole responsibility for what was happening in the frame, to leave the discomfort of the crew to others and to take time to assess if I was getting what I needed from each take to put a film together. Working for G&E and Camera on that was excellent training. The set had a professional Gaffer and key grip, and watching their synergy and expertise is always beneficial and a pleasure, even if a little intimidating.

I had the opportunity to DP two pre-thesis projects as well. Both had their own challenges, but it was satisfying to see how much better I understood the workflow by the time I was working on the second film. Apart from the actual production, I enjoy the investigative side of the DP's role. The research doesn't only include visual references and location scouting, but also investigating a recording device and it's workflow, understanding what kind of set you'll be dealing with, etc. I definitely hope to find more opportunities as a Director of Photography.

## **Background / Sources of Inspiration**

When I entered the program I was sure that I would be interested in creating documentaries, but nothing really connected. Although I was looking forward to our first year documentary project, working on it seemed oddly forced. I attribute part of this to a feeling of displacement. The Southwestern region of the United States was completely new to me. There were so many different aspects about Austin's identity and my new environment to choose from. I didn't want to make a documentary about my experience as an outsider or a newcomer. I really wanted to step outside of myself in graduate school. I watched peers connect strongly with a local or regional theme or subject, and I didn't think I had as much to say. Constructing a world with its own characters and conflict seemed like the best way to actually create something new.

*Who Is Paloma Carter* started as script I began writing in the fall of 2013. One of the primary goals of working on another narrative film was to push the story and develop something more fleshed out than my pre-thesis and first year films. I knew that once I had the bones of a better developed story I had a lot to say and could make strong, creative choices in depicting it. Later during the writing process, I remember thinking back to the scene in a novel by Sandra Cisneros, realizing that I wanted my scripts and stories to have the same succinct boldness. I loved the way it was simple, visual and conveyed the a lot about the character and their personal dilemma. Like Cisneros's novel, the works that have made the deepest impression on me are not as heavy on plot points as they are on the character's interiority.

Part of film school is figuring out what kind of films you want to make, and in retrospect, I realize that a large part of the films I've tried to make here reflect an internal, memoir-like literature that I am compelled by. I blame my high school English Literature professor for this. At the same time that I learnt about photography, I was assigned to the English Literature class that started with James

Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, an incredibly visceral, atmospheric memoir that was based more on a structure of vignettes rather than an overarching plot. Other examples of literature that have influenced me are Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. In this memoir, the protagonist, Elaine, recalls her childhood and also her struggle with conventional roles of femininity due to an unconventional upbringing. Apart from being strongly rooted in the protagonist's interiority, both these novels deal with coming-of-age and characters that are in a transitional phase.

I realize however that in cinema a script needs to have a three-act structure and that a more experiential quality can be left to the interpretation of the director. However the final film *Who Is Paloma Carter* is more about Paloma's state of mind as she faces the question of who she is going to be. When I was stuck in the screenwriting process and was overly concerned with writing a script that seemed action-packed, I would realize that the kind of story I was going for was an intensely subjective one. I thought about what I wanted to see on the screen and most of it was the character's face as she goes through a transitional phase. This subjectivity mirrors some of the feeling of an impressionistic memoir piece.

Some examples of this that I stumbled on in contemporary independent cinema include the 1990's film *Muriel's Wedding*, a recent, fairly mediocre film with Charlize Theron called *Young Adult*, (also about a woman in crisis experiencing some sort of coming-of-age later in life), and Lena Dunham's *Tiny Furniture*. While all of these films are conventional narrative films with a solid plot structure, they are all also psychological portraits of women in some sort of transition.

## PRE-PRODUCTION

### The Story Nugget

Although I always knew I would go to college and have a life centered on my work, my mother had a very different experience. As I've gotten older, I find it essential to acknowledge what she thinks she may have missed out on. When I first made a project pitch for my thesis film last fall, I dubbed it a "Postmenopausal Coming-of-Age Story." *I wanted to write a female character that had to find herself and her identity, in a way that's not celebrated or spelt out by society.* This was going to be the story of a late-bloomer, someone who didn't find all the answers at the "right" time. Life's stages don't always pan out the way are they "meant" to, and I wanted to create a film that addressed that.

I was compelled by the idea of giving an older character the awkwardness and agony of adolescence. Early sketches of the script played with Paloma shopping at a drugstore and looking for a new hair color, to unsuccessfully trying to mingle with her career-centered younger girlfriend's art crowd at a post-modern nightlife spot called "Barbie Undone." I wanted to play with the idea of her feeling culturally irrelevant. I was interested in society's attitudes towards aging and women, and was therefore attracted to environments and settings such as the beauty section in the drugstore. The Barbie Undone Lounge featured a wall-length projection of the iconic *Barbie* figure, addressing the skewed, ironic way modern societies acknowledge the persistence of archaic, predefined concepts of womanhood.

These were mostly just exercises to get a feel for the real conflict, but I was seeing that my main character was meeting possible versions of what kind of woman she could have been. This finally distilled into one younger woman moving into her house as a tenant. The idea of Paloma stealing a wig started with this the tenant, Kirsten. I'd hit upon a scene where an older woman (Paloma) who is recently widowed watches a glamorous, diva-esque young woman move in across her courtyard. I knew it was an odd choice to use another character as one of the primary means of connecting with our main character, but Kirsten's diction, attitude and self-centeredness were all traits that compelled me to solidify her character. Her whole

basis was that she was almost a caricature, an absurdly superficial embodiment of power, youth and beauty that triggered buttons in Paloma. I enjoyed developing Kirsten's character; much of this was of course her dialogue and backstory, but also largely makeup, casting and wardrobe.

Developing the role of the wig further stemmed from an early scene. In this earlier version of the script, Paloma is on her way to a job interview the day after Kirsten moves in. She catches sight of her new tenant's steely, mannequin-like figure in an upstairs window, glimpsing her as she takes off her wig. Something about this ritual fascinates and intimidates her a little. The suggestion during a feedback session that Paloma should steal the wig was of course an exciting possibility because it finally offered a way to make Paloma's issues less internal, giving her something to act upon. This decision helped to shape a lot of the story.

The idea of stealing this young woman's wig also reminded me strongly of a scene I'd read that really stayed with me for a long time, from the novel *Never Marry a Mexican* by Sandra Cisneros. Cisneros's entire work was based around feeling like the other woman in a biracial adulterous relationship where she was the minority, the second-class citizen. She visits her boyfriend's home on some pretext after he has ended the relationship. It's a home he now shares with his wife, who is not a Mexican like herself. Cisneros describes how she explored the various spaces of this house, and placed a single gummy bear in a few different key places, including the bathroom cabinet. She describes how she pressed the messy, gooey shape of the gummy bear into the pretty, expensive-looking bottles and instruments in the cabinet belong to this woman.

This scene stayed with me because I clearly remember feeling, through this simple act, the narrator's deep desire to be recognized, to have her robbed position as the woman in this man's life acknowledged. There is a sense of lack in this character's gesture, similar to Paloma, whose trespassing also allows her to interact with something belonging to someone else. In Paloma's case, she is trespassing upon a symbol of power and beauty that she thinks is not hers to have in the first place.



## The Writing Process

From my experience with writing thus far, the only way to make it better is to re-write, re-write and re-write. The most difficult thing is to give up control and hand in a draft, absorb responses and move on. If I had to do it again, I don't know whether I would be any better and churning out drafts and pages, certainly wish I had been.

The most exciting thing about writing is listing down different possibilities. I started writing down possible nuggets of stories as they came to me from the summer of 2013. My biggest challenge was moving beyond setting and characters to the big picture and plot development. Most of the time I'd find a scenario that I was really excited about and figure out the basic potential conflict that two characters represented to each other, and then I'd be stuck. In hindsight I think the trick may be to be less precious about each and every idea, but I think that just comes with experience. Additionally, I'd get embroiled in details. My favorite thing to do was to just start writing a scene. For me, feeling out the pace, tone and aura of a character through their movements, body language and possible dialogue was part of discovering the root of their character.

In all my scripts in film school, I know I've wanted to keep the scope small and focused till I could have a well-fleshed out, satisfying story to work with. Eventually I did begin to draft what were close to plot outlines, but again, it was hard to completely land at a conclusion in those outlines. I'd proceed to just go at a draft and see how it would develop, trying to develop at least the tone and the major thrust of the character in individual scenes. I always felt incredibly blind in the screenwriting process, because even as far as the fall of 2013 I didn't realize how important of a tool script feedback and critique was. In hindsight I realize that the responses from a good feedback session were actually *telling* me what the story is, what the next possible step should be, based on the scenes I had drafted so far. Our thesis 488M classes in Fall 2013 was also the first time we were introduced to a scripted feedback format that was thorough and comprehensive. This really changed the way I thought about the writing and later the editing process as well.

My first major feedback session from the class was about a year ago, in November 2013. At this point there was a *lot* going on in Paloma's life for a short film. Apart from the major change in her life, which was then the death of her husband, there was a power-driven artsy best friend, Miranda, an absentee self-absorbed, condescending daughter, Sylvia, a new tenant, Kirsten, as well as a potential romantic interest. Of course people responded to that and I cut one relationship out of that immediately. This was similar to the feedback I received from my thesis committee, who also advised me to focus and eliminate certain elements, especially the death of her husband. This particular change also helped me focus the emphasis of the story, and take it away from being a story about loss to one about a search for identity and confidence.

After this point I began churning out outlines and ideas quite quickly for a month. The idea of Paloma literally losing her voice and trying on Kirsten's clothes (initially her underwear!) began to develop. As I explored the idea of her literally losing her voice, I was really excited. I loved that this was a simple, audio-visual way to express what the character was going through. The draft outline I had by mid-March started out with Paloma having no voice, and more interaction than Carl does. The date with Carl also ends badly and she leaves it.

This was the draft that I really tried to stay with for a long time. I also worked with Teresa Warner from the MFA Screenwriting program to have a go at the script. We had a few meetings and discussed possible changes in the outlines. She did a writing pass on a few of the scenes, but it came down to me to make the major story changes. By the end of April, I had a locked script with a first shooting day of May 12th. That's when the real fun began.

## Casting

Casting for *Who Is Paloma Carter* was definitely one of the more tangibly satisfying parts of the process. One of my main goals for the film as a director was to be as systematic about most of the stages as I could. A lot of thesis films were working with casting agencies, and I definitely considered this. Apart from budget considerations, I found myself really strongly compelled to start digging into seeing possible versions of Paloma in the flesh, and so I worked with my producer to set up our first round of auditions ourselves. I suspect that part of this was to start sorting out some of the writing issues I was having and seeing how the scenes would play out.

Of course part of the challenge in a low-budget independent film, especially a student film, is that we have to start pre-production on a script that is not locked. The discomfort of this is perhaps the most character-building aspect of film school, but a hard one to work through. For me, as someone who is still finding their confidence as a writer / director, this would translate immediately into auditions. The auditions were as much a process of casting as they were a process of simply practicing adjustments.

Choosing the right “sides” and adapting them to be suitable for audition was a crucial part of the process. I had a producer, a co-producer to help with the logistics, time slots and organization, and a handful of volunteers to help fill the roles of “readers” in the scenes. The casting calls we put out were based on viewing the submissions and signing up people for time slots instead of an open call, which I didn’t see as being useful at all for this project, and thus there was a great deal of time management work.

The call back round was very rewarding and exciting, since by that stage I had narrowed down Paloma to two possibilities, the role of Kirsten to four. We still

coordinated it so that everyone would read against each other. The actresses narrowed down for Paloma were June Griffith Garcia and Mary Anzalone. June had an older, much more visibly vulnerable quality to her, and I immediately thought she was the strongest, most obvious choice. That's partially why I chose to play with this and explore Mary, who was very different.

I immediately noticed that Mary loved to talk about decisions and adjustments. More importantly, directing and rehearsing with her was truly like playing. She responded with a genuine change to every adjustment and direction. She was a great listener. I also responded really well to the earnest, sincere look of her face. I thought it was much more inviting to an audience. I was really satisfied with the casting process because I trusted my instincts. It was important for me to hear out my own reasons before consulting others, and I think that paid off.

## **Building a Team**

A few weeks before leaving Austin for a winter break in 2013, I spoke to Kelly Ota to see if she was interested in coming on in Producer. I was a little nervous about this because I knew that once I had an efficient, business-minded producer on board, the momentum of the project would pick up it start feeling like we were entering pre-production. Kelly is one of the few people in our program who has a certain quality that makes her just the person you want on your side. I was immensely cheered and felt incredibly lucky when she said yes!

This being a student film, I'm still used to expecting to have to control many departments myself, and part of me enjoys that. The way Kelly and I worked was to completely take over separate areas, which worked well. I was completely in charge of Equipment Reservations and research for example and almost exclusively communicated with the DP about additional equipment needed, etc., apart from just shot-listing and story-related questions. Kelly completely handled the budget so I pretty much did not have to think about it through the entire process.

Kelly was also instrumental in helping fill other positions in the crew. Our shooting dates were a very busy time, and finding crew to fill each position on all of our shooting days was a challenge.

Shortly after I had spoken to Kelly, I knew that the next big step was choosing a DP. I wanted someone who was disciplined and mature enough to set a certain tone on the set, but who was also comfortable with most of most of the people who would probably end up being on the crew. I spoke to Huay Bing-Law and Tom Rosenberg. Huay had worked on my classmate Minh's thesis film and I had been on set with him. He was approachable, relaxed but had a great work ethic and Minh's filmed looked beautiful. After sharing the script and having a discussion with both of

them, I chose to work with Tom. I knew he would bring interesting references to the table, and he was very interested in shooting it. Once Tom was on board, he brought Jim Hickox on as Gaffer, which put my mind at ease. I knew they would both enjoy working together and understood each other well.

Another role that I was very concerned about was the 1st AD. I knew that I would struggle with focusing on directing and be tempted to micro-manage other areas, and I really needed someone who would be mindful of that. I was happily surprised when Lauren Kinsler offered to take on the role. For many students, the role of the AD is the most cumbersome one to take on. It usually involves being aware of a lot of logistics, and novices tend to forget that their main role is to make sure the director is being supported in making the best decisions. I knew Lauren would make this her main concern and let everything else fall into perspective. She's also someone that people respond well to, and is able to conduct other people without being pushy or domineering. During production, she was where she needed to be, working as another part of my brain! Unfortunately she could not be available for all of our shooting days. Kelly and I had also spoken to Nina Vizcarrondo, who shared the role with her, taking on four of our eight shooting days.

## **Locations**

The main location had a particular need: an addition attached to a main house. Although we weren't sure if the final shot list would have a wide shot, we still wanted it to be one location to reduce the amount of company moves. Using people's personal space is always an uncomfortable situation since not everyone understands the scope of a film production. I had some experience in working with the Texas film commission, but finding something so specific was a long shot. Kelly and I were both keeping our eyes and ears open, when I finally heard about the home of an undergraduate student through a mutual acquaintance.

I visited the house with Kelly. It had a lovely, soft quality to it, full of plants and creaky, beautiful wood. It belonged to a talented and down-to-earth cartoonist who worked out of his home. His daughter was enrolled in RTF, and also involved with our production, and this helped obtaining permission. The initial house I'd had in mind was a little colder and more typical, but I found that this added its own personality to Paloma's story. I was concerned about whether the cocooned, natural setting of the house was too mellow for the jet-setting, career-driven Kirsten character to move into, but it's something I embraced and worked with. As far as Paloma went, it worked well to portray her as an isolated character lost in her fantasy world.

One thing I found to be a cumbersome challenge was that this film had two scenes, one initially very extensive, in a car. Apart from the limitations of shooting with a real car, it also meant finding a parking lot that would look like it was attached to a run-of-the mill office building, perhaps a government building. There were a lot of smaller locations such as these: an office conference room, the parking lot of the office building, the parking lot of the restaurant and the doctor's office. There were different offices to talk to for permission for different parking lots, even if they were on campus. The doctor's office was something that Kelly and Sophia (our co-producer) happened to know of from a previous film in the program: the UT Nursing school. Finally, our co-producer Sophia came through for us by letting us shoot the date scene at her family's restaurant

## Storyboarding

When I was on the set of Annie Silverstein's thesis film I saw that her binder included a photo-storyboard that she and the DP had worked on. In my classmate Trinh Dinh Le Minh's case, he basically went ahead and shot the entire movie on a DSLR camera and even loosely edited it, to have a good sense of what he was dealing with and if it was working.

I thought that visualizing the whole film with a DSLR was an incredibly good idea, and that, like hands-on casting, it would help me put the film together in my head. This would not only help as I continued to tweak the script, but would also alert me to make sure I got the information I needed from each shot when on set. Tom also wanted to incorporate this into our pre-production. Initially, he and I went over the script in detail and brought our references to the table. We then dove into coverage and started shot listing. It was a great, fun collaboration as both of us pinpointed key visual moments and specific shots that really stood out to us when visualizing the script.

The next step was to do the DSLR storyboard. We managed to storyboard 70% of the script, which felt comfortable before going into production. It was wonderful to be able to spend time at a location without the hassle of equipment and actually see what the frame looked like. I was adamant to sort out as many kinks as possible before production, and therefore we coordinated one of the rehearsal times with both actresses to be on location. This served as a camera rehearsal for everyone, actors, DP, and director. It wasn't easy obtaining location permission, coordinating actor's availabilities etc., but I cannot recommend this part of the process enough and personally value it much more than an illustrated storyboard.



## Visual References

1.

*JEANNE DIELMAN, 23 QUAI DU COMMERCE, 1080 BRUXELLES*, 1975,  
DIR: CHANTAL AKERMAN



This austere, slow-paced film, reminiscent of Yasujiro Ozu in its formal, locked-off framing, conveyed the power of mundane life and domestic spaces. This portrait of a single, lonely housewife elicited the desire to develop the complex character of a middle-aged woman dealing with loneliness.

2.

*The Hours*, 2002, Dir: Stephen Daldry.



The character of Laura Brown from *The Hours* is a woman who is isolated and somewhat invisible. The aesthetics and visual tone of this film, especially in depicting Laura Brown's haunting experience, came to mind when working on visualizing *Who Is Paloma Carter*.

3.

*Vagabond*, 1985, Dir: Agnes Varda.



Agnes Varda's film *Vagabond* made a strong impression me when I first saw it. It felt visually contemporary and made a social commentary using landscape and setting. Its main protagonist is a woman negotiating her role in society.

4.

*The Headless Woman*, 2008, Lucrecia Martel.



This film is fascinating. Boldly quiet, restrained yet poignant, it is an incredibly subjective portrait of a woman displaced in her own life due to a head trauma. This pretext is used to let the audience examine the society she lives in and her role in it. I love the film's emphasis on setting and small interactions. This film also helped me shape the subjectivity of my film, as well as its pacing and visual look and feel of my film.

5.

*Gloria*, 2013, Sebastian Lelio



This is a contemporary portrait of a single woman in her later years that is both reflective and truthful but also humorous and warm.

## **PRODUCTION**

### **Scheduling**

As production grew closer, so many last minute details such as smaller locations, last minute crew, and other nitty-gritties were being tied together. Because of 4 principal characters (Paloma, Kirsten, Sylvia and Carl) as well as about seven different locations in all, scheduling was a huge task. Kelly as producer had been working on the strip board for about a week, but all of our scheduling work culminated in a huge meeting a day before our equipment checkout. Although I was extremely tense as it was just a few days before production started, I also find the step of sitting down with the AD and going over the timetable for each day to be incredibly gratifying. Since we had two capable AD's as well as our producer present at the meeting, I felt like the DP and I were in good, supportive hands and that is a feeling to treasure! The scheduling meeting is also an extra step to help us to grasp and mentally prepare for what is to be accomplished on every production day: the number of set ups, the complexity of shots, the kind of performances and directing I would be dealing with, etc.

Although the director should ideally be able to focus just on performance and frame, I had been overseeing hair, makeup and wardrobe largely on my own since the producer and co-producer were consumed with other aspects of pre-production. We had been working with a hair and makeup team of three people since there was a wig that needed special care and attention, and a good deal of wardrobe changes. The wardrobe department in particular needed a lot of attention, and I had to work on a detailed wardrobe schedule since we were working with a talented but young undergraduate costume major from the theater department. The extent of the wardrobe, hair and makeup changes and transferring all of that coordination to the AD was particularly worrisome to me.

## **Day 1**

I love the art of making a good schedule. Day 1 took care of three smaller scenes in none of the main locations, which mentally seemed like a much more achievable task. We were starting with the retirement party being shot right on the 7th floor of the CMA building, which felt safe, comfortable and close to home! It was a great, small scene to sink into but had a dolly shot that Tom and I were excited about. It also had a lot of extras, but somehow the challenge of blocking a scene with so many people was stimulating and not overly stressful.

Things quickly got pretty elaborate, especially since we were dealing with staging areas for extras and equipment on three different floors. One of the things that kept me calm and grounded was the amount of preparation time Mary and I had spent together. I like to think I didn't allow too much *rehearsal* time, but more preparation time, letting her ask questions about the character that were new and didn't get stale or formulaic, so that she was still curious and engaged.

As the first set up took time, as it always does, the normal anxiety associated with that did set in but there was also a lot of positive energy. We did have a very tight deadline for the UT Nursing School, so that kept us on our toes, and we managed to do our first company move and lunch on time.

## **Day 2**

This was our first day in the main house. The crew always tends to get comfortable once we arrive at one location for a day, so I tried to stay as focused and secluded as I could to set a focused, serious tone for that day. Of course Lauren, our 1st AD, was doing her job well too so that helped move set ups along.

I remember that I was physically incredibly sick that day. I had made as many notes as I could for myself but there was still a huge underlying feeling of dread. While it is natural to always feel underprepared as a director, I think that I silently felt that I would need to make changes in the script on the spot. While this may seem

incredibly unwise to some extent, some of the issues that my committee had cautioned me about were really percolating in my mind. Of course there was a limited scope within I could make changes. What kept me sane was that the changes were more to do with scenes we were filming later. It was the Restaurant and Date scene that was a huge worry for me. It just wasn't clicking. I didn't want to discourage my producer by sharing all of this with her, so this really felt like a silent burden.

In the meantime, I was constantly re-examining and questioning Paloma's intent and emotional state in the earlier scenes, and was constantly coming up with new directions to try. Although stressful, it was also an exciting process because I felt I got closer with each re-think. Mary and I tried a lot of variations in the scenes, and I think she enjoyed this process too. It kept it active and engaging for both of us. I really wanted to feel that on this set.

### **Day 3 / 4**

By this day, I was feeling better physically. It was an exciting day because it was the first big scene between Kirsten and Paloma. The scene had a lot of elements I was looking forward to, including Production Design. This was a department that caused us a little bit of pain. I was working with Emily Haueisen, who is a talented and competent production designer. However she had over committed and was not on set enough to actually dress it enough. Amanda Gotera, who was Script Supervisor, did double duty on some days. I was incredibly, incredibly fortunate that she is a friend and one of my favorite collaborators in the program, and I had been discussing production design with her anyway merely out of interest. Due to her willingness to really spread herself thin in support of the film, we achieved the look we wanted.



## **Days 5 / 6**

Our schedule gave us a halfway day off, which was of course appreciated by all! The next four days had the scenes with the biggest problems. I was gearing up and did my best to tune into all my instincts to make the best decisions. Before I voiced a growing suspicion, Tom casually mentioned leaving Sylvia out of the scenes. I knew this was the right decision. I felt incredibly troubled about this since Angelina Castillo, the actress I had cast as Sylvia, had been a dedicated and strong supporter of the project right from the beginning. She was in fact initially an option for Kirsten. She showed up at plenty of rehearsals and wardrobe fittings punctually. I consulted Kelly about this we unanimously decided that I would have the initial conversation with her, with Kelly following up to deal with payments, credits and other issues.

Cutting the Sylvia character from the scenes helped me loosen up and embrace re-shaping them a little. I realized that I had leeway to change dialogue creatively, although handing different lines to the actors pretty much on the day of made me a little uncomfortable. Both David Hess and Mary were, however, trained SAG eligible, professional actors, and were able to handle this just fine.

In terms of set ups and production, the days at the restaurant had a few more technical hiccups. We had a hard out of 4:00 pm everyday since the restaurant would open for business at 5pm! What I dreading most was the amount of production design required in this scene. We were shooting a fusion Chinese / Japanese restaurant, but wanted to make this look like a more continental, grown-up nightlife venue. The production design I discussed with the production designer was set up to change the entire look of the restaurant. However since she wasn't available, myself and the DP, and again Amanda were mainly dealing with this. It wasn't working at all. In my mind this was a bonafide disaster, and it took a little urging from the DP to let go of the massive fairy-lit flats we had ordered.

### **Day 7**

Day 7 saw us shooting our two car scenes at two new locations. It was our only outdoor daytime shoot, but it was hot! Eliminating Sylvia from this particular scene was a little less stressful. It mostly meant simpler blocking and a few line changes. Lauren was due to AD that day but was sick. Our classmate Mark Blumberg, another incredibly supportive team player, showed up instead and did a great job. It took a while to get off our feet though due to the new location and the logistics of working out of our cars and the CMA building that was a few blocks away. The second car scene was after dark, so we had a long lunch break. This was also a scene that we had not been extensively storyboarded, and it somehow felt rushed and uncomfortable. In retrospect, this was the scene that I re-wrote and re-shot later.

### **Day 8**

Our last day was a night shoot back at the house location. This was again a smart scheduling decision because it gave us a break in the day, and we had early shooting the next day. I was satisfied with all the decision-making that had gone on so far, but I was frustrated with the final scene we shot. This was also a scene I had struggled with and was trying to find some resolution with Kirsten, but it seemed arbitrary and pointless to me. It was a little sad to end on a note like that because we shot a lot of takes but I really didn't feel it was going anywhere. In the edit, this scene was mostly cut.

## POST PRODUCTION

### The Editing and Feedback Process

In our first year editing packet from editing professor Anne Lewis, I remember one particular line in the introduction: “An overactive editor, who changes shots too frequently, is like a tour guide who can’t stop pointing things out... If you are on a tour, you do want the guide to point things out for you, of course, but some of the time you just want to walk around and see what *you* see.” I came into the program as someone who was very familiar with the technology of the non-linear editing platform, but knew very little about the value of a single cut. Restraint and distance in editing are qualities that I wanted to develop and investigate.

Although I knew the sane option was working with an editor, it seems I needed to put myself through the process once more to really learn that lesson! Having said that, I do feel I learned a bit more about editing through this process. I also spoke to Qian Zhuang to come on as a collaborator in editing. Although her semester did not permit her coming on full time, she did act as a consulting editor earlier on and was very helpful in talking through problems and solutions.

Like the writing process, the editing process offers a lot of control and possibility. It’s hard to give up that control. I shared my first cut much later than I would have liked. Similar to writing, I am challenged by working in broad strokes earlier on. I get caught up in laying down rough sound design and adding some sort of finesse before sharing it. This may not seem like a huge problem, but working to get the overall structure right earlier can save a lot of pain later.

When I shared the first cut, initially just with committee members, it was a hard step. The feedback was painful but of course necessary. I knew that step would be there, and I knew that some of the problems were solvable, while others were not. Some of the feedback concerned the likeability of the character, which I had to put

aside for a while to fix the other issues. I showed a very different cut to a larger audience, and this time used a fuller feedback form to get more specific responses in different categories. Some of this was also painful but also very helpful.

### **Re-Shoot**

Two things were really bothering me. One was the lack of any resolution that was satisfying. As Andrew Shea pointed out, the ending scenes didn't feel earned at all, and this is really the worst fear. Upon reflection I realized that the scene after Paloma's date is where the transformation in her character really happens. I decided to do a pick up. I touched base with Kelly, but since this was a pretty last minute thing, her support couldn't be as full on as she wanted, but we still pulled this thing together. Mary (Paloma) and David (Carl) were very supportive. We did however have to get an entire new crew together, as well as new DP since Tom was invested but busy with prior commitments. Nathan Duncan, a recent graduate, took up the role. He was really good at lining the script and shot listing quickly and efficiently a few days before. A slightly stressful part of the pickup was finding the wig! Luckily it was in my trunk, disheveled but usable. We managed to get a competent makeup artist who was willing to go out on a limb and try working with a wig that had to look undone and then reset at the beginning of each take. We also could not find Mary's original clothes, and this took a bit of creative thinking and some gaff tape!

Working in the pick up scene was very beneficial. Since we had the opportunity to re-shoot, I fleshed out the script a lot more, made Carl a more active participant, and really turned the emphasis on Paloma learning that she could find her voice, literally, without the aid of this glamorous wig.

### **ADR**

As the cut neared a final stage, I called in Mary and Carl for ADR sessions. Some of this was just to fill in some blanks, but some of this was quite a lot of new off-screen dialogue to help shape some of the changes in scripting.

## CAST MEMBERS

1. Paloma
2. Kirsten
3. Carl
4. Sylvia

Boss  
Co-Worker 1  
Co-Worker 2  
Co-Worker 3

Doctor  
Mailman (O.S.)

End of Shooting Day 1 -- Friday, May 9, 2014 -- Pages -- Time Estimate: 0:00

End of Shooting Day 2 -- Saturday, May 10, 2014 -- Pages -- Time Estimate: 0:00

End of Shooting Day 3 -- Sunday, May 11, 2014 -- Pages -- Time Estimate: 0:00

Sheet #: 1 1 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 1	INT Day	Conference Room Paloma's Retirement Party	1	Est. Time 4:00
Sheet #: 2 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 2	INT Day	Conference Room After the retirement party	1	Est. Time 1:30

LUNCH 1:00

Company Move 1:00

Sheet #: 7 5/8 pgs	Scenes: 7	INT Day	Doctor's Office Paloma goes to the doctor	1, 4	Est. Time 3:00
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End of Shooting Day 4 -- Monday, May 12, 2014 -- 2 1/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 10:30

Sheet #: 4 5/8 pgs	Scenes: 4	INT Mornir	Paloma's Living Area / Hallway	1	Est. Time 3:30
Sheet #: 8 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 8	INT Day	Paloma's Living Area Paloma listens to music on the couch	1	Est. Time 1:00
Sheet #: 12 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 12	INT Day	Paloma's Living Area A package is dropped off		Est. Time 1:00

LUNCH 1:00

Sheet #: 13 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 13	EXT Day	Paloma's Front Porch Paloma finds the package on her front porch	1	Est. Time 1:30
Sheet #: 3 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 3	INT Mornir	Paloma's Bedroom Paloma wakes up	1	Est. Time 1:30
Sheet #: 10 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 10	INT Day	Paloma's Bedroom Paloma looks in her wardrobe	1	Est. Time 1:00

End of Shooting Day 5 -- Tuesday, May 13, 2014 -- 1 4/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 10:30

Sheet #: 14 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 14	EXT Day	Kirsten's Front Door / Yard Paloma approaches the addition.	1	Est. Time 2:00
Sheet #: 15 1 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 15	INT/E/ Day	Kirsten's Front Door / Hallway Paloma delivers Kirsten's package	1, 2	Est. Time 3:00
Sheet #: 16 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 16	EXT Day	Kirsten's Addition Paloma enters Kirsten's apartment	1	Est. Time 1:00

LUNCH 1:00

Sheet #: 5 pgs	Scenes: 5	INT/E/ Mornir	Paloma's Living Area / Yard Kirsten arrives	1, 2	Est. Time 1:30
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End of Shooting Day 6 -- Wednesday, May 14, 2014 -- 1 4/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 8:30

Sheet #: 9 7/8 pgs	Scenes: 9	INT Day	Paloma's Hallway / Front Door Kirsten at the front door	1, 2	Est. Time 3:00
Sheet #: 17 6/8 pgs	Scenes: 17	INT Day	Kirsten's Addition Paloma finds the wig.	1	Est. Time 3:00

LUNCH 1:00

Company Move to Main House 1:00

Sheet #: 11 5/8 pgs	Scenes: 11	INT Day	Paloma's Bathroom - Montage Paloma getting ready	1	Est. Time 1:30
Sheet #: 27 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 27	INT Night	Paloma's Living Area Paloma goes back.	1	Est. Time 1:00

End of Shooting Day 7 -- Thursday, May 15, 2014 -- 2 3/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 10:30

End of Shooting Day 8 -- Friday, May 16, 2014 -- Pages -- Time Estimate: 0:00

Sheet #: 18 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 18	EXT Evenir	Restaurant / Cafe Paloma turns heads	1, 4	Est. Time 2:00
Sheet #: 19 1 pgs	Scenes: 19	EXT Evenir	Restaurant / Cafe Paloma asks Carl to Dance...	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 2:30

LUNCH 1:00

Sheet #: 20 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 20	EXT Evenir	Restaurant / Cafe Paloma and Carl dance.	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 1:30
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End of Shooting Day 9 -- Saturday, May 17, 2014 -- 1 3/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 7:00

Sheet #: 21 1 6/8 pgs	Scenes: 21	EXT Night	Restaurant / Cafe Carl asks Paloma to dance again	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 3:00
Sheet #: 22 7/8 pgs	Scenes: 22	EXT Night	Restaurant / Cafe Paloma and Carl dance again and catastrophe	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 3:00

LUNCH 1:00

End of Shooting Day 10 -- Sunday, May 18, 2014 -- 2 5/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 7:00

Sheet #: 6 2 7/8 pgs	Scenes: 6	INT/E Day	Sylvia's Car / Office Building Sylvia takes Paloma to the doctor, they run into C	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 3:00
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LUNCH 1:00

COMPANY MOVE 1:00

Sheet #: 23 3/8 pgs	Scenes: 23	INT/E Night	Sylvia's Car / Parking Lot Carl talks to Paloma after the fall	1, 3, 4	Est. Time 2:00
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End of Shooting Day 11 -- Monday, May 19, 2014 -- 3 2/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 7:00

Sheet #: 24 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 24	INT/E/ Night	Kirsten's Front Door / Entry Way Paloma returns.	1	Est. Time 1:00
Sheet #: 25 2/8 pgs	Scenes: 25	INT Night	Kirsten's Addition	1	Est. Time 2:00
Sheet #: 26 1 pgs	Scenes: 26	INT/E/ Night	Kirsten's Front Door / Entry Way Kirsten comes home.	1, 2	Est. Time 3:00

**LUNCH 1:00**

End of Shooting Day 12 -- Tuesday, May 20, 2014 -- 1 3/8 Pages -- Time Estimate: 7:00



WHO IS PALOMA CARTER?

Written by

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Phone cameras CLICK and flash all around as PALOMA, 52, stands with her hands by her side at the end of a long conference table. A cake and some party plates and napkins sit on the table.

BOSS

We'll miss you Paloma - you've been  
a trusted member of this team for  
so long, and we're sad to see you  
go.

A few AWWW's softly echo around the table from COWORKERS. Behind a timid but gracious smile, Paloma's large, warm eyes dart watchfully around the room.

PALOMA

This is very sweet, I appreciate  
it.

(looking softly down)  
Coffee cake's my favorite.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh good! Betty down the hall told  
me it was!

Paloma glances furtively up at the YOUNG WOMAN, 32, standing to attention besides BOSS, 43. She beams efficiently at Paloma, a pretty smile stretched on her lips.

PALOMA

(nodding)  
Ah! Well,  
(a nervous laugh)  
here we go!

Paloma cuts her cake.

COWORKER 1 (O.S.)

So, got any exciting plans?

Paloma looks up at the question, smiling uncertainly.

PALOMA

Uh... I... I...  
(her smile falters a  
little)

COWORKER 2 (O.S.)

All that free time to yourself,  
mmmmmmmm...

COWORKER 1  
 (to Coworker 2)  
 I know what you're  
 thinking!

PALOMA  
 I was... maybe thinking of  
 (titters nervously)  
 Some dance less--

COWORKER 3, 32, comes in brashly for a slice.

COWORKER 3 (O.S.)  
 Any holidays planned? Gonna go see  
 the world?

COWORKER 2(O.S.)  
 (to Coworker 1)  
 There's no denying it- It would  
 definitely be a three month long  
 yoga retreat for me.

Paloma looks up from one voice to another as she places a cake slice on a paper plate, a slight strain in her gracious smile. LIVELY CONVERSATION and LAUGHTER ensues around her.

2 INT. - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

2

A rich, LILTING HUMMING fills the room as Paloma's eyes warily survey the dirty utensils stacked up efficiently. She sways a little as she looks wistfully around the room. She pins a red flower to the side of her hair as she sings.

PALOMA  
 Dancing.... Dancing... dancing on  
 the other side of the moon.

She picks up two heavy bags from the floor and shuts the light.

3 INT. - BEDROOM - MORNING

3

On Paloma's bedside, a recent looking portrait of a vibrant young couple. Behind that, a larger framed photo of a handsome, kind looking man in his early '40's.

Paloma's eyes open. She sees the bright morning light and looks around her bedroom warily. She frowns, listening to the birds CHIRPING noisily. Recognition slowly dawns on her face, and she gets up slowly.

4 INT. - LIVING AREA / HALLWAY - MORNING 4

Paloma's face eagerly watches the record needle as it touches a record.

MELODIC, LILTING MUSIC floods the room.

Paloma takes a sip of her tea from a nearby table, a fresh efficient morning look about her and a flower in her hair. She savors the tea, looking round her big, empty house energetically.

Slowly, her body starts swaying. She puts down the teacup and dances with an imaginary partner, her hair gleaming in the soft morning light.

She closes her eyes and presses her lips softly together in concentration, a soft, content smile on her face. She dances.

Slowly, her eyes open, she frowns curiously, as if listening hard.

She goes to the record player and switches it off, a hand on her throat, concentrating hard.

5 INT. / EXT. - LIVING AREA / YARD - CONTINUOUS 5

A moving truck TRUNDLES into the yard outside, CRUNCHING GRAVEL as it slows down and stops.

Paloma nears the half-closed blinds. She pushes down one of the blinds, squinting in the noon glare.

KIRSTEN, 24, drops out of the passenger's side: a young woman with large, bright blonde hair, dressed in huge Jackie-O shades and cigarette pants. She waits, her head held high and posture straight as a rod. A YOUNG MAN, sharply dressed, comes round. He encircles her waist dotingly. Kirsten remains calm and collected, smiling and gently pushing him away.

Paloma's fingers pry open the blinds a little more, and her wide eyes curiously survey the young woman keenly, looking her up and down.

6 INT. / EXT. - SYLVIA'S CAR / OFFICE BUILDING- DAY 6

Paloma sits in the passenger's seat and gazes up at the office building, lost in thought.

She looks intently at her reflection in the side-view mirror. Her eyes traverse the details of her face. She leans in and examines herself thoughtfully.

Someone WRAPS on the driver's side window. She whips around: CARL, 55, dressed in work trousers and shirt, his glasses dangling from his neck, stands at the window, a small brown parcel and a coffee in hand as he bends down, smiling eagerly.

CARL  
(muffled voice)  
Hey!

Paloma's eyes light up, and her mouth twitches into a nervous smile. He motions for her to roll down the window. Paloma leans forward and smiles a little. The window WHIRS down.

CARL (CONT'D)  
(grinning)  
Someone's back soon?

Paloma gazes brightly at Carl. Her lips open slightly, but she simply stares. Her smile falters.

Carl looks a little flustered and points to his brown bag.

CARL (CONT'D)  
I was just getting my usual  
afternoon fix, you know,  
(nodding his head toward  
the street)  
from around the corner. What are  
you doing here?

Paloma's smile fades slowly, a look of small, silent terror creeping over her face.

Carl's smile fades and he looks at her curiously.

Heels CLICK CLACK softly and Paloma looks up as SYLVIA, 28 walks briskly past the windshield, her hands carrying a heavy cardboard box and a small plant. She sees Carl and shoots her mother a quick glance.

SYLVIA  
(to Carl)  
Hi...?

CARL  
Hello... Oh, I see...  
(looking back from Paloma  
to Sylvia).  
I'm Carl - I work right up here.  
(nodding at the office  
building)

SYLVIA  
Right, nice to meet you.

CARL  
Here, let me...  
(opening the door for  
Sylvia.)

SYLVIA  
Oh,  
(relaxing and smiling  
warmly)  
Thanks!

Paloma sits back slowly, her large eyes moving about as if trapped.

CARL  
Here,  
(smiling awkwardly)  
let me...

Carl takes the box from Sylvia as she gets into the car.

SYLVIA  
Oh, thanks so much!

She throws her mother a secretly charmed look as Carl slides the box into the back seat. Paloma manages to flash her a small, wavering smile.

Carl appears at the window, peeking down. Sylvia looks back between him and Paloma.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)  
(pointing back and forth)  
So, um, same department?

CARL  
No... well, the same floor...  
I was just telling your Mom I hope  
to see her around...

Paloma smiles nervously, her face flushed. She tucks her hair behind her ear.

SYLVIA  
Well.. we are going out for drinks  
tomorrow night...  
(glancing at Paloma  
quickly)

CARL  
U-huh...

SYLVIA

..to Reggio's, downtown, you know?

CARL

Right, yeah, of course -  
(looking at Paloma gently)  
they have good dancing music.

SYLVIA

Hah, yes they do - so- uh, you'd be  
welcome to join us, if you like.

CARL

Oh wow, I'd - I'd love to.  
(looking dubiously at  
Paloma)  
Are you sure it wouldn't be an  
imposition - I don't wanna  
intrude..

Sylvia looks at Paloma's anxious, small face, and gives a  
secret, questioning look. Paloma looks at her helplessly.

SYLVIA

Of course not! No, Mom would love  
to have you - we'll be there at  
around seven pm.

CARL

I'll see you ladies then.

He gives a fluttery, excited smile and walks off. Sylvia  
turns to her mom.

SYLVIA

You doing OK?

Paloma's face looks small and tight. She looks hauntingly at  
Sylvia.

7

INT. - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

7

Paloma looks at the tongue depressor as it slowly exits her  
mouth. She closes her lips as gracefully as possible.

Her eyes follow the DOCTOR as he takes the tool away and  
brings his hands to her throat. Paloma's warm, large eyes  
look up earnestly at him as he feels for lumps. He takes away  
his hands and flashes Paloma a quick smile before heading for  
the other side of the room.

Paloma smiles back uncertainly, turning to watch him as he talks secretively to Sylvia.

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
There's nothing physically wrong.

SYLVIA  
I see..

DOCTOR  
Any, recent changes, in her life?

SYLVIA  
Well, she did retire two days ago.

Paloma's eyes narrow as she anxiously studies the conversation from afar.

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
(in a slightly hushed  
tone)  
Hmmm, well that's big. You just  
have to treat her normally. Just,  
just act like she can talk. Push  
her out there!

8 INT. - LIVING AREA - THE NEXT DAY 8

MUSIC LILTS out of the record player. Paloma sits on the sofa blankly, slowly sipping her tea, twirling her flower in her hand.

9 INT. - PALOMA'S HALLWAY / FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS 9

The doorbell RINGS.

A large, glamorous silhouette stands at the door as Paloma walks down the hall.

Paloma enters the hallway and picks up an envelope labelled "LEASE COPY FOR UNIT B TENANT" from the console table. Paloma slows down, cautiously eyeing the large, sparkling shadow outside the frosted glass window. She opens it and peers out:

KIRSTEN  
Mrs. Carter, I hope I'm not  
disturbing you.

Kirsten stands poised and collected, a large purse dangling off a delicate, upturned wrist. Paloma looks in awe at the large spheres of Kirsten's dark glasses, pin pricks of light glimmering in them.



Her eyes immediately dart upwards to a huge, bright blonde bouffant twirled glamorously on top of her head. Beneath the shades, her small, pink lips are curled into a restrained, polite smile.

Paloma waves her hand in dismissal, a nervous smile on her face, and hands her the envelope. Kirsten looks at her and then glances around the porch.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

Oh, right thank you for this. I was actually wondering if any packages may have been delivered ahead of me?

Paloma's lips open and fumble.. She gazes at Kirsten, and shakes her head slowly, looking very uncertain.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

No..? They haven't?...

Paloma gives a small nervous LAUGH. Kirsten eyes her curiously.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

Well, I was expecting something for a client.

(she lightly pats her bouffant)

Could you please let me know if it gets delivered here?

Paloma nods vaguely. Kirsten looks at her.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)

Your daughter did clear with you that I work out of my home, yes?

Paloma nods again, standing up straighter. Kirsten looks her up and down once more and then leaves. Paloma stands and watches the bouffant as it turns around and floats off, heels CLICK CLACKING.

10 INT. - BEDROOM - DAY

10

Paloma's eyes dart from one wardrobe item to the next as she slides them down a rack.

11 INT. - BATHROOM - MONTAGE

11

Paloma methodically brushes her hair in the mirror.

She parts it in the middle.

She parts it to the side.

She puts the flower back in it. Takes it off.

She paints on dark maroon lipstick.

12 INT. - LIVING AREA - LATER 12

The DOORBELL rings. A LOUD KNOCK, and a muffled voice calls out:

MAILMAN (O.S.)

UPS!

A few THUDS and FOOTSTEPS walking away.

13 EXT. - PALOMA'S FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS 13

Paloma opens the door as the truck DRIVES AWAY and spots a couple of large parcels at the door. Looking down, she sees the label "URGENT" and "OVERNIGHT" stamped on them.

14 EXT. - KIRSTEN'S FRONT DOOR / YARD - DAY 14

Paloma looks up at the addition as she walks up to it, the heavy package in her hands. She presses the bell. Looking at the windows upstairs, her eye is caught by something:

Behind the light dappling on the window, daylight shimmers off a large mass of golden hair around a blank, lifeless face. She angles her head and sees that the face is a wig stand.

15 INT. - EXT. - KIRSTEN'S FRONT DOOR / HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 15

Paloma hesitates, but rings the bell, her eyes darting up to the window.

LOUD HEELS THUMP and approach the door. It opens swiftly.

Paloma stares at the face that greets her: powdered and starkly pale, the red hair tied back severely. The architectural outline of dramatic black eyeliner gives it a ghostly, eerie look. A professional looking eye-liner brush is held delicately in Kirsten's hand.

Kirsten's eyes softly fall towards the package in Paloma's hand and springs up urgently.

KIRSTEN  
Finally! It's here.

She glances up at Paloma and quickly dives round the corner. CELL PHONE BUTTONS BEEP and Kirsten's HIGH HEELS THUMP. Paloma lingers uncertainly in the doorway with the heavy box. Soft, jazzy MUSIC wafts from around the corner, and Paloma enters, peering round it:

Kirsten quickly puts on her wig cap and pins, and proceeds to put on an elaborate, brunette wig, a phone crooked on her shoulder.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)  
Yes, Kirsten Child. Yes could you tell Ms. Delmonte her piece has arrived?

Behind her, a work table full of wig stands and other wig-related supplies. Luxurious furniture. Kirsten suddenly stiffens.

KIRSTEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(very softly)  
Did you say one hour? --

She stands up straight and quickly finishes setting her wig.

KIRSTEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I can be at the venue in 15 minutes.

She turns to Paloma.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry, Mrs. Carter, I apologize.  
(efficiently taking the box)  
But I have a business emergency.

Paloma backs out of the way, shutting the door behind Kirsten as she wields the heavy package out the door. Kirsten turns around, and looks at Paloma's earnest, wide-eyed face.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)  
I appreciate you bringing this over.

Paloma gazes at Kirsten, fascinated, and smiles.

16

INT. / EXT. - KIRSTEN'S HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

16

Paloma's hand turns a key in the door. It opens, and she enters cautiously, and climbs up the stairway.

As she approaches the landing, her eyes take in the airy, light-filled room full of pretty, feminine furniture. Her searching eyes spot the large, blonde bouffant sitting slightly lopsided on a wig stand on a small vanity table, an old fashioned brush, mirror and perfume bottles next to it.

She approaches it and gently touches the hair.

Quickly glancing out the window, she grabs the glamorous, blonde bouffant wig and, bunching up her hair, tries it on. She turns around and looks at herself in the full length mirror.

Daylight slants into the room, glistening off the bouffant. Her eyes wondrously survey the mass of blonde framing her face. She SMIRKS at herself.

Her body starts swaying lightly to the MUSIC.

She slowly straightens her shoulders and sways more freely. A gentle, whimsical HUMMING starts to accompany the music.

Slowly, the song starts to fade out.

In the mirror, Paloma continues to HUMMMM...

Suddenly, she stops. She slowly brings her hands down to her throat and looks at her mouth, still puckered slightly from her humming.

Tentatively, she starts to sway again, and picks up the HUMMING. She relaxes and glows at the sound of her own VOICE. She slowly straightens her shoulders and walks around, turning her face to one side, and then the other, jutting out her shoulders and smiling flirtatiously.

Slowly she takes the wig off, and looks at it.

17

EXT. - RESTAURANT / CAFE - TWILIGHT

17

Soft, JAZZY music wafts through the evening as the blonde bouffant walks by a rosy, sunset sky dotted with fairy lights. Under it, Paloma's face is made up prettily, and she wears a feminine scarf around her neck and pretty pearl earrings. She eagerly takes in the ambience, her eyes darting around.

A few HEADS turn as she walks by.

Next to her, Sylvia, dressed smart casual in jeans and a nice top, looks around sheepishly, dodging looks up at her mother's hair.

18 EXT. - RESTAURANT / CAFE - EVENING

18

Paloma darts flirtatious looks up at Carl, twirling her cocktail umbrella.

Carl eyes the outlandish blonde bouffant uncomfortably, darting uncomfortable smiles at Sylvia. He sips his cocktail, chewing on the straw a little.

SYLVIA

So, Carl, what department did you say you're in again?

CARL

Oh, uh, Medical Records.

SYLVIA

And so does that kind of mean the same set of skills that Mom's work had?

(gesturing over to Paloma hopefully)

Carl twitches a little as Paloma touches his foot under the table.

CARL

Uh, well, somewhat. Paloma's work was a little more managerial, you know. She really supported her whole department  
(his eyes shine with appreciation)  
I'm more of a number-cruncher.

SYLVIA

Ah, Gotcha.

Paloma blushes at Carl's praise and sits back, sipping her drink. The MUSIC changes and the melody LILTS more. She starts HUMMING and bobbing her head to the music, darting Sylvia and Carl merry looks.

Carl eye's flit back and forth from Paloma, an uncomfortable grin on his face. She bobs her head to the music and looks at him intently. She stops bobbing:

PALOMA

Carl, will you dance with me?

19 EXT. - RESTAURANT / CAFE - EVENING 19

A SERVER raises his eyebrows as he walks by a secluded patch of grass strung up with fairy lights. Carl nods at him an acknowledgement as he dances with Paloma.

Paloma dances whole-heartedly. Carl relaxes and smiles.

20 EXT. - RESTAURANT / CAFE - NIGHT 20

Paloma smiles charmingly across the table, her chin resting on her hand.

PALOMA

And that's how I ended up at the  
end of day one at a meditation  
camp! Throwing up all over the  
person next to me...

Paloma's free flowing speech melts into a soft peel of LAUGHTER. Sylvia sips on her cocktail and gazes at her mother in fascination. Paloma gazes dreamily past Carl into the fairy lights behind him, continuing:

PALOMA (CONT'D)

I never really tried it again with  
any commitment...

Paloma lightly fingers the scarf loosely dashed around her neck.

PALOMA (CONT'D)

...But I sometimes...  
(furrows her brow)  
..DO - REALLY - FEEL - the - URGE  
to simply...

Paloma closes her eyes and inhales a whiff of air.

PALOMA (CONT'D)

...run into the middle of nowhere  
and just breathe by myself-

She opens her eyes and looks directly at Carl:

PALOMA (CONT'D)

For ages!

Carl CHUCKLES softly at her exuberance. He looks at her tenderly.

CARL  
Well, maybe meditation is just too  
strong for your digestive system.

Paloma CHUCKLES.

CARL (CONT'D)  
Maybe all you need is to dance.

SYLVIA  
I didn't even know you went to a  
meditation camp - when was this?

Paloma's smiles sweetly at Sylvia.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)  
(brushing it off with her  
hand.)  
Oh, that doesn't matter Sylvie.

Paloma sits back, a little quiet. Carl looks at her gently  
and leans back, looking down at his drink.

The MUSIC picks up to a lively, jazzier beat.

Carl looks at Paloma meaningfully and cocks his head to one  
side.

PALOMA  
Again?

Carl gets up with his hand extended. Paloma glances at him  
briefly and takes his hand, swigging back her glass of wine.

SYLVIA  
(leaning forward)  
Mom!

PALOMA  
What, Sylvie?

SYLVIA  
(pointing to her own hair and  
mouthing)  
Careful!

21 EXT. - RESTAURANT / CAFE - NIGHT

21

Paloma and Carl dance gaily. Paloma's eyes are tender and  
full, her body uninhibited.

Carl twirls her around. Once. Twice.

The SERVER, his face blocked by a large tray full of drinks, heads towards them.

He twirls her a third time.

CARL

Oh, shit!

The Server THWACKS into her just as Carl tries to pull her back to him. Paloma lets go of his hand and totters as she recoils from the server. A few drinks fall and SMASH to the ground.

She lands on the ground, a cut on her hand. She looks around frantically and sees the blonde wig on the floor. She looks up and sees Sylvia and Bill looking at each other and running towards her. A few GUESTS stare at her and the wig on the side.

CARL (CONT'D)

Paloma, I'm - I'm so sorry, it was my fault.

(raising his hands to his head)

Oh my God - are you okay?

Paloma takes Carl's hand and gets up. Tears sting her flushed face, but she manages a weak, nervous smile, dodging his gaze.

She LAUGHS nervously and catches her breath.

CARL (CONT'D)

Uh, here...

He offers her the wig.

She looks at the wig and back up at Carl, taking it slowly from him. It unravels in her hands. Sylvia's eyes dart around, somewhat embarrassed, towards the watching GUESTS.

Paloma gives another nervous LAUGH.

22 INT. / EXT. - SYLVIA'S CAR IN PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES 22  
LATER

Paloma shuts the door of the passenger's seat as Sylvia gets into the other side. Her eyes dart up warily to see Carl approaching them. He motions her to roll the window down. Paloma rolls it down, her eyes darting up to him furtively.



CARL  
 Paloma, look - I - I just wanted  
 you to know I had a really nice  
 time.

Paloma looks up at him and smiles a soft, sweet smile. Sylvia  
 STARTS the car and Paloma gives Carl a sweet shrug. Carl  
 waves back uncertainly and they drive off.

23 INT. / EXT - KIRSTEN'S FRONT DOOR / ENTRY WAY - LATER 23

Paloma looks behind her cautiously and turns the key in the  
 door. She opens it slowly and, looking around, steps in.

24 INT. - KIRSTEN'S ADDITION - CONTINUOUS 24

Paloma tentatively places Kirsten's wig on the wig stand. She  
 tries to places some of the loose locks back in place.

A light moves outside and she GASPS as a car turns into the  
 driveway. Paloma looks around her, panicked, and backs away  
 from the wig.

25 INT. / EXT. - KIRSTEN'S FRONT DOOR / ENTRY WAY - CONTINUOUS 25

Paloma blinks as Kirsten's CAR DOOR SHUTS. She opens her door  
 and steps out. Kirsten's brisk, confident strides slow down  
 as she sees Paloma exiting her house. Paloma gives a NERVOUS  
 LAUGH.

KIRSTEN  
 Mrs. Carter?

Paloma notices that she looks tired and worn out under the  
 big, glamorous wig, her rigid posture sagging just a little  
 under her heavy bags.

KIRSTEN (CONT'D)  
 Is everything OK?

PALOMA  
 Ms. Child, I'm... so incredibly  
 sorry.

KIRSTEN  
 For what?

PALOMA  
Your.. blonde wig..  
(Paloma gestures up to her  
hair)  
I borrowed it from you.

Kirsten walks past Paloma and looks at her from behind her door, looking up towards her bedroom.

KIRSTEN  
The one upstairs?

PALOMA  
I just put it back, and I am didn't mean to keep it. Please let me know if I can compensate you for any damage or inconvenience I've caused.

Kirsten looks at Paloma's tender, exhilarated face.

KIRSTEN  
I'm very tired right now Mrs. Carter, so I just want to go to bed. I'll look at it in the morning.

PALOMA  
I'm so sorry again, Ms. Child. You, you have a good night.

KIRSTEN  
Thank you.

Kirsten gives her a courteous smile and closes the door.

26

INT. - PALOMA'S LIVING AREA - A FEW MINTUES LATER

26

Paloma puts her red flower in her hair and a record in the record player and begins to organize her records. She HUMS.

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